Safety Management System

SMS

Federal Aviation Administration

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Fostering Aviation Safety & Infrastructure Development Thru Government & Industry Partnerships

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The forecast growth in air transportation will require new measures and a greater effort from all of the aviation community, including airport operators, in order to achieve a continuing improvement in the level of aviation safety.

The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) has developed safety standards for member States, including the requirement for States to have a safety program with the intended purpose of achieving an acceptable level of safety in the operation of aircrafts.

The use of a Safety Management System (SMS) at airports can contribute to achieving an acceptable level of safety, by increasing the likelihood that airport operators will detect and correct safety problems before those problems result in an aircraft accident or incident.

It's been said that a SMS would provide a systematic, proactive, and a well defined safety program that would allow the FAA, Airport Operators or any organization producing a product or service to strike a realistic and efficient balance between safety and production.

I'm sure that everyone in the room will agree that the elimination of accidents would be desirable, but a 100% safety rate is an unachievable goal. Failures and errors will occur, in spite of the best efforts to avoid them. No human activity or human-made system can be guaranteed to be absolutely safe or free from risk.

An effective Safety Management System requires more than establishing an appropriate organizational structure and establishing rules and procedures to be followed. It requires a genuine commitment to safety on the part of top management.

The attitudes, decisions and methods of operation at the policy-making level will demonstrate the priority or importance given to safety.

A key indicator of management's commitment to safety is the adequacy of resource allocations.

Our headquarter office has initiated a rulemaking project to amend Federal Aviation Regulation (FAR) Part 139 which will require certificated airports to establish a Safety Management System.
The Notice of Proposed Rule Making (NPRM) is expected in September 2008

Darryel Adams, of our headquarters office has developed an Advisory Circular (150-5200-37) that will provide guidance to airports on the ICAO requirements for SMS and it will explain the FAA's position on implementing SMS at certificated airports in the United States, District of Columbia, or any territory or possession of the United States.

If a regulation on SMS is adopted the FAA will update the SMS Advisory Circular and issue additional guidance as necessary for the implementation of SMS, including a detailed checklist and possibly a model SMS plan document.

The FAA nation-wide is encouraging the operators of certificated airports to implement SMS in view of the ICAO requirement and in anticipation of SMS being included in the forthcoming change to FAR Part 139.

SMS should compliment Part 139 with a minimum burden on airport operators.
The FAA has determined that contract cost incurred for the development of an initial SMS at an airport is eligible for AIP planning grant funds.

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In successful aviation organizations, safety management is a core business function, as is financial management. Effective safety management requires a realistic balance between safety and production goals. Thus, a coordinated approach in which the organization's goals and resources are analyzed to help to ensure that decisions concerning safety are realistic and complementary to the operational needs of the organization.

If properly implemented, safety management measures not only increase safety but improve the operational effectiveness of an organization

Before the FAA or any organization can implement an effective SMS that organization must first possess an effective safety culture. In an effective safety culture, there are clear reporting lines, clearly defined duties and well understood procedures. Personnel fully understand their responsibilities and know what to report, to whom and when. Senior management reviews not only the financial performance of the organization but also its safety performance.

Effective safety management requires a systems approach to the development of safety policies, procedures and practices to allow the organization to achieve its safety objectives. Similar to other management functions, safety management requires planning, organizing,communicating and providing direction.

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SMS provides a proactive, systematic, and integrated method of managing safety for airport operators. Essential to a SMS are formal safety risk management procedures that provide risk analysis and assessment.

Industry standards and International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) describe Safety Management Systems in term of four distinct elements.
1. Safety Policy and Objectives
2. Safety Risk Management
3. Safety Assurance
4. Safety Promotion

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It is widely accepted that most accidents result from human error. While it maybe easy to dismiss these human errors as acts of carelessness or incompetence, recent research and accident investigation reports suggest that human error is merely the last link in the chain of events that leads to an accident.

The aviation community is coming around to the notion that most accidents are "organizational" in nature where latent conditions combine with active failures to produce an accident.

If most accidents are indeed organizational, it follows that organizations are the best place to control those factors that are known to lead to accidents.

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The SMS is based on the premise that there will always be hazards and risks associated with the operation of an airport but, with a proactive Safety Management System in place organizations can identify and mitigate those risks.

The ICAO standards have been adapted for U.S. airports making a SMS mandatory at certificated airports. The SMS would be documented as a part of or as an appendix to the Airport Certification Manual (ACM)

The SMS would be a supplement to current FAA airport safety and certification rules in 14 CFR part 139, and does not replace any existing FAA regulations or policy guidance. By 2/08 AAS-300 will determine whether SMS should be required for all certificated airports or should it apply to a certain size & complexity of airport.

For more information see Advisory Circular 150-5200-37, Introduction to Safety Management Systems for Airport Operator.

www.faa.gov/airports_airtraffic/airports/resources/advisory_cirulars

Questions